



Immanuel- God with US

by Emily | Dec 27, 2017 | Encouragement | 0 comments



Waiting for anything is often a challenge. Whether it is a well-earned holiday, a countdown to Christmas, a promotion or a change in life's circumstances, waiting is something we aren't usually keen to do. Since Adam and Eve took a bite of that fruit, the world has been in a period of waiting. God was waiting. The angels were waiting. We are even told creation was groaning in its waiting. All waiting for the Kingdom to come to earth. This Christmas season, I

have been reminded afresh of the amazing gift of Jesus. In Matthew 1: 22-23, we read of Joseph having a dream where an angel appears and says:

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet:
"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall call his name Immanuel"
(which means, God with us).

Jesus, fully God, came as a tiny, fragile baby into a world in waiting. Waiting for an answer for sin, waiting for salvation. As I have meditated on what this means, a few things have really stood out for me:

1. **Jesus came as a helpless baby into the mess of the world**, the mess of a stable, the mess of an unwed yet pregnant poverty-stricken mother to humbly declare that his way of seeing is different from ours. God came to be *with* us. God wasn't sending his Son into a clinical ward surrounded by the best doctors and midwives with champagne on tap; the God of the Universe came into a lowly stable through the birth canal of a teenager to declare he came for the lowly, the outcast, the downtrodden, the person burdened with sin in need of a Saviour. This Christmas period, if you groan under the weight of this world, know that you are in good company. Jesus came to declare his kingdom to a world in need. If we are too self-sufficient, too self-focused, or too puffed up with our own importance, we may just overlook our need for him. Like the smelly Shepherds, off in the fields, we are invited in to kneel down and view the baby. May we remember though and recognise that this baby grew to be a teenager, became a carpenter, hung on a cross and rose again so that we could humbly be made right with our Creator.

2. We are in the now but not yet. As people in the post-resurrection world, we are having our views changed to be more like the Jesus whom we follow. While we are freed from our sin through forgiveness offered at the cross, we are also living in a world that is still groaning under the weight of sin. We live in the now where we see aspects of God's kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. We see answered prayers, the miracle of a changed life, the Spirit's work in and through us, aspects that show us how wonderful it is that God is *still with* us. Yet, as Paul says, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." (1 Corinthians 13:12). We are still waiting; we may see glimpses of his kingdom here on earth, yet we also see and experience the battle taking place. We know the promises of God now, yet are also waiting to behold him face to face. Like the Shepherds who looked on the face of Jesus, we long to see him return in his royal splendour. We experience hardship we don't understand, we see hardened hearts to the life-changing truth of the gospel and we question- 'how long O Lord?' We want justice and mercy to be poured out now, yet we fervently hope and pray for our loved ones to bow their knees at the feet of Jesus before he returns. God is *with us* but we are waiting for God to **dwelt amongst us once more as the ruling King.**

3. We are invited in to Kingdom work. One of my favourite characters in the early life of Jesus is the Prophetess Anna. Anna had known pain and hardship- she had lived as a wife for a short 7 years before he died. As an 84 year old woman, the majority of her life was spent as a widow at the temple. Yet instead of turning bitter, Anna's heart was Godward. She stayed at the temple worshipping with prayer and fasting 'night and day'. Anna loved God. She didn't perpetually navel gaze, looking on her circumstances and questioning why God had given her the life she had. Instead, she used her life of being a widow as a means for pursuing God. Into her 84 year old life comes Jesus- he is brought to the temple for the first time in his life for his mother Mary to offer sacrifices according to the law. Anna is at the temple at the hour Jesus is presented and her response is to declare God's kingdom. We are told- "And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem." (Luke 2:38). Anna's response shows us that we too

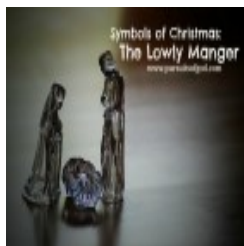
are invited in to declare the wonders of God, worshipping him and speaking of him to those who are waiting- to those burdened under the weight of their sin in need of a Saviour. To do this though, we need to lift our eyes off our circumstances and behold our Saviour- God *with us* and in us who can use us to declare his kingdom to the world in need.

Dear friend, I don't know how this Christmas period has been for you. As you journey through the waiting between Christmas and New Year, reflecting on the year past and looking to the year ahead, may you taste and see God's goodness. His goodness goes beyond our schedule and it goes beyond our circumstances. God is *with us* and one day will dwell amongst us again- tangible, personally, forever and always. May you step into the new year ready to declare his kingdom to a world in need, living out the reality of God's rescuing pursuit of us so that we can in turn pursue him. Like Anna, may we be women who worship our risen King declaring his Kingdom and may we be ready for his long-awaited return.

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